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Rebranding High School Sports Programs

High school sports programs often find themselves in trademark disputes with college or NFL teams due to logo appropriation. I intend to show how the history and design of sports logos can relate to logo design for high schools that want to have the same feel as the logos they borrow. By looking at multiple graphic standard manuals and design processes of current college and NFL teams, I will see how designing a sports logo can contribute to a high school program. In particular I will take a deep dive into each high school's culture to create a logo that is unique to them. I will use Lincoln High and Lincoln Southwest as examples of how to rebrand a high school sports program.

Logos have always been important to a sports team. It allows people to identify the team easily, but most importantly it gives people the feeling of being connected to the team. In the article "How important is it for a company to have a great logo?" by Peter Shadbolt, he says "For most people the logos of such firms immediately connect our minds to the business in question, without the need to see its name." Having a successful logo and brand is essential to these sports teams in order to insure that they can make the most money. One of the greatest examples of this is the University of Oregon. Oregon has one of the most recognizable logo and brand in the sports industry. They pride themselves in being untraditional and always having different flashy uniforms. But their logo never changes, the signature "O" stays the same while the brand of changing and pushing the envelope is what

makes Oregon's brand so recognizable. Having such a unique branding strategy brings attention to sports programs. In an article "How Nike and Oregon Created College Football's Perfect Brand" for Bleacher Report, Adam Kramer wrote "The look and feel of a football program from the uniforms to the locker room to the overall vibe can serve as a kicker in a decision." Athletes see a sports program and depending on how they feel about the brand of the program it can have a heavy say as to if they want to be a part of it. Having a successful brand can also lead to others wanting to emulate that success.

Like Oregon, many college and pro teams have contracts with companies like Nike who have design teams that design the brands for them. These people help the schools capture the feeling of being proud of the brand. But it is what the people within the program do that truly makes a sports program brand special. In an article titled "Branding in college football: Identity goes beyond just uniforms and logos" Andy Staples says "Like anything else, a football team's brand is mostly defined for better or for worse by the quality of the product." Regardless of how great of a job companies like Nike do, people will feel more connected to a team by how well they are doing on the field and in the community. Having a logo and brand is just a way for them to show others they are connected to the program. When people feel connected to a team it will in return make the team feel like they are doing something worth wild.

High school sports programs, like college and pro teams, want to capitalize on the success of having a good brand. Some high schools will feel the need to take a successful college or pro logo and apply it to their brand. They will do this by

switching the colors of the logo or adding their high school name to it. This is where a lot of them find themselves in trouble with the law. The college and pro teams will have their legal teams send a “cease and desist” order to the high schools. In the article “Colleges Tell High Schools Logos Are Off Limits” Adam Himmelsbach writes “Universities steadfastly protect their trademarked logos, which appears on everything from oven mitts to underwear, and their reach is increasingly stretching toward high schools.” Colleges are cracking down on high schools even more now with the increasing rate high school football games are being televised and streamed online. With high schools getting more national attention this also brings in additional money from merchandise for that high school. That high school’s reach becomes bigger than it was, which allows their brand to expand nationally. Just like how most college and pro team’s brands do. In the article “Trademark Issues with Use of College Names, Logos, Mascots” Lee Green writes “The rise in concern by colleges over the use of their trademarks has been attributed to the increased revenues derived by universities from logoed apparel and merchandise, the increased visibility of high school marks on the internet through school websites and social media.” Green is saying how with the increase of accessibility to these high school logos the higher likelihood that they will bring in revenue from that logo. This does not sit well with college and pro teams, as they believe high schools should not be allowed to use their logos, let alone make money off of them. This problem is only getting worse and will not go away anytime soon.

As stated above for my senior thesis, I am using Lincoln Southwest and Lincoln High as examples of what a rebranding of a high school sports program

looks like. Having great success brings about imitation; Oregon is one of the most imitated brands in the sports world. A prime example of this is Lincoln Southwest high school. Lincoln Southwest's primary logo is a hawk but they use a lot of Oregon's wings secondary logos. In order to start rebranding Southwest high school I needed the athletes' input. I gave out a survey to the athletes on the girls basketball team that asked them nine simple questions about their current logo and uniforms. The questions were, in general do you find your current logo appealing, does your current logo make you feel like you have a swagger, in your opinion can your uniform's design improve, which one is your logo, does your brand/logo feel modern, what would you like to see in a redesign of your school's athletic logo, do other schools you play have better logos/uniforms than your school, in your opinion does your high school athletic brand matter, and do you think the athletic logo should be the same as the academic logo. From the survey, I found that the majority of the athletes did not find their current uniforms appealing and modern. About 75 percent of the athletes surveyed thought the athletic brand mattered. A question I did not ask but a lot of the athletes brought up was the fact that they felt like their uniforms and basketball logo felt generic.

From researching articles and conducting my survey, I found that two of the biggest reasons a lot of high schools prefer to use college and pro teams logos is it "fits" their school the best and it is the cheapest option for the high school. Many schools do not realize how much legal trouble they can get into if a college or pro team orders a "cease and desist" on them. There are numerous ways to go about rebranding that aren't using found logos. Since high school athletics are becoming

more popular on TV and on streams, high schools are seeing more “cease and desist”. I intend to show Southwest and Lincoln High that they can have a logo and brand that fits their school that will not be as expensive and will not get them in the legal trouble of stealing another team’s logo. Lincoln High does not use an existing logo but would like to have an updated logo that gives their athletic department a modern feel.

As I continue to mold my thesis, I intend to implement the same strategy I did with Southwest at Lincoln High. The survey I give to the athletes at Lincoln High will be the exact same, so I can get consistent results. Once I am able to survey Lincoln High, I will be able begin the process of rebranding their athletic department. I will start with Southwest’s girls basketball program and continue to communicate with their head coach Jeff Rump. I will simultaneously work with both schools to ensure they receive the best end product that fits the needs they were looking for. Through out this process, I will continue to consult my committee that consists of Matt Mejstrik, Joe McDermott, and Alex Jacobsen. The committee will continue to grow along side the creative process. Each one of these three brings a different view to the sports and design worlds. Going forward I will continue to collect research. I will do this by looking at graphic standard manuals of college and pro teams in order to fully understand what it takes to create a modern brand that will get fans to feel a connection to the school.

After I have conducted all of the research and designed final brand models that fits the needs for both high schools I will create graphic standard manuals for the schools and a physical jersey for them that will showcase the final product. The

connection to these school's culture and fan bases will be on full display in this final product. The end product will allow schools to see there is no need to borrow college or pro team's logos. The creation of a logo that is unique to a high school will allow them the same feel as a college or pro team's logo.

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Literature Review

Adam Himmelsbach (2010)

This article from the New York Times talks about how high school programs are becoming more popular on television. As they grow in popularity on television, colleges and NFL teams are being more vigilant about telling high schools not to use their logos. Lots of high schools like Glades Day have become under fire for using a college's logo.

Lee Green (2015)

The main issue that is addressed in this article is the fact that many college and NFL teams are sending out cease and desist paperwork to high schools for using their logos. The CLC (Collegiate Licensing Company) is one of the main companies that help colleges deal with high schools using their logos.

Ron Bishop (2001)

Bishop talks about the changes that happen to sports logos over time. He uses semiotics and postmodern ideology to connect his points. One point he brings up is how the logo should bring about a positive relationship between the team and the fans. If the logo is great then the fans will want to buy more of things that are team-related. The logo is the fan's "contact" to the team.

Devon Elizabeth Estes (2011)

The world of sports is a billion dollar market and teams benefit from fan loyalty. What can keep fans even more loyal than the team being good is a well-designed brand and logo. Estes analyzes how current NFL logos help the teams in being successful with fans and making money.

Peter Shadbolt (2015)

This article does not just focus on sports logos but company logos in general. A logo for most instantly connects them to the company with out much thought. If a company wants a good logo they should look at their company's values and start there, designing a logo around that. This way it is easier for everyone to connect to the company. Shadbolt uses multiple examples of companies like Nike, Gap, and Starbucks.

Daniel Engber (2013)

The Redskins logo in recent years has brought about controversy, many feel it is being disrespectful to American Indians. The "Indian Head" has been used in the sports world for along time. The use of the "Indian Head" has been shown as demeaning and should not be used. This article does not talk about what it takes to make a good compelling sports logo but instead what not to do.

Analysis of survey

After conducting the survey I found a lot of the basketball team at Lincoln Southwest Liked the idea of having a new brand/logo. The majority of them thought that having an athletic brand mattered. All most all of them felt like their uniforms were generic and could benefit from a redesign. When I asked if they felt like their current logo brought about a swagger most said no but felt like they had a swagger due the uniforms being Nike. Again all most all thought that their uniforms could be improved. When I showed them two different pictures (one of the academic logo and one of the many athletic logos used for basketball) they mostly associated with the academic one. Some after taking the survey said they think that their current logo looks cartoony. Below is a master sheet of the survey that I gave the athletes.

MASTER

Survey

Surveying athletes

In general do you find your current logo appealing? If not please explain why not.

Colors	1	2	3	4	5	ALL (13)
Symbol	1	2	3	4	5	
Placement	1	2	3	4	5	

DIDNT UNDERSTAND
SPLIT

Does your current logo make you feel like you have a swagger?

1	2	3	4	5	BETTER CUZ NIKE
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In your opinion can your uniform's design improve?

Yes	XXXXXXXX	No	
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Which one is your logo (Look at pictures up front) which do you associate with the most

1. ACADEMIC	2. "ATHLETIC"
XXXXXXXX	

Does your brand/logo feel modern (show pictures of logos)?

Yes		No	
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What would you like to see in a redesign of your school's athletic logo?

Yes		No	
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Do other schools you play have better logos/uniforms than your school?

Yes		No	
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In your opinion does your high school athletic brand matter?

Yes	XXXXXXXX	No	
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Do you think the athletic logo should be the same as the academic logo?

Yes		No	
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Production Schedule

Week-->		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Date-->		6-Feb-18	8-Feb-18	13-Feb-18	15-Feb-18	20-Feb-18	22-Feb-18	27-Feb-18	1-Mar-18	6-Mar-18	8-Mar-18	13-Mar-18	15-Mar-18	20-Mar-18	22-Mar-18	27-March-18	29-March-18	3-April-18	5-April-18	10-April	12-April	17-April	19-April	24-April	26-April	1-May	3-May
Topic:	Senior Thesis																										
What is happening	Listen to others present	present thesis	Start ideation for Southwest	continue Ideology	Narrow down main ideas	Digitalize top ideas	Meet with Coach	Use feedback to push versions	Start ideation For Lincoln High	Continue LH Ideation	Narrow down main ideas	Digitalize top ideas	Continue to meet w/ coaches	Use coach's feedback	Finalize final ideas for both HS's	Start planning out graphics standards manual	continue to work on manuals	continue to work on manuals	start to finalize manuals	Finalize manuals	Finalize manuals	Finalize everything				Fine tone everything	
Meet W/ Colleen																											
Due	Thesis Paper			4 sketches	20 sketches		digital forms of finalized ideas	top 2 SW		20 Sketches for LH		digital forms of finalized ideas			Final brands for both HS's	Sketches of layouts for manuals	have system for manuals done							Everything			